Prosocial Behaviors as a Marker of Health and Enhancer of Well Being

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What are Prosocial Behaviors?

• Actions that benefit others
  • Sharing, kindness, helping, comforting, volunteerism, civic engagement

Typology of Prosocial Behaviors

- Six types:
  - Dire
  - Compliant
  - Emotional
  - Anonymous
  - Public
  - Altruistic

- Types vary across situations and motives
- Across adolescence and adulthood

Why should we care? (pun intended)

• Marker of morality
  • Moral action
  • Reduces social injustices
  • Fosters intergroup harmony and social integration
• Parents, communities, societies care
  • Community cooperation and civic engagement
• Marker of health and well being
  • Negatively linked to risk and maladjustment (e.g., violence, drug use, mental illness)
  • Positively linked to self esteem, positive interpersonal relationships, physical health, academic outcomes
• Structured volunteerism
  • 22% of U.S. millennials
  • 1.6B hours of service
  • $36.5B economic impact (Independent Sector, 2015)
Prosocial Behaviors as a Marker of Health

- Focus on positive well being and health outcomes
- Provides holistic, balanced perspective on ethnic/racial minorities
  - Redress negative stereotypes and stigma
  - Informs healthy development models rather than deficit and pathology models
- Importantly, provides guidance for development of interventions that do not solely focus on reducing maladaptation but rather focuses on enhancing well being and health
- In addition to markers of pathology and maladjustment (e.g., substance use, mental illness, violence), we need markers of true health and well being
  - Prosocial Behaviors
What Predicts Prosocial Behaviors?

- Prosocial behaviors are linked to:
  - Sociocognitive Skills
    - Social Understanding
    - Moral Reasoning
    - Positive Self Concept and Self Efficacy
  - Socioemotional Skills
    - Easy temperament including positive emotions
    - Empathy, sympathy
    - Forgiveness, gratitude
    - Guilt, shame
  - Self Regulation
Prosocial Behaviors Are Also Linked to:

- Positive Physical Environments
  - Low levels of conflict in the home
  - Adult-supervised community agencies
  - Structured activities (e.g., sports)

- Positive Socialization Agents
  - Positive media exposure
  - Caring teachers
  - Prosocial peers

- Supportive parenting and family relationships
  - Warmth, secure attachment
  - Inductive Disciplining Practices
  - Prosocial Parenting Practices
    - Social and material rewards, moral discourse, experiential learning
Resiliency and Risk

- Factors that enhance well being and/or protect from adversity
- All children are at risk
- Poverty
- Discrimination
  - Systemic and institutionalized
  - Interpersonal and intergroup
- Minority children often have added risks
  - Low quality schools
  - Deviant peers and unsafe neighborhoods
  - Toxic environments (e.g., chemicals, pollution)
  - Family conflict, instability (mobility), and chaos
  - Immigration status
Evidence for Prosocial Behaviors as Enhancers of Health and Well Being
Prosocial Behaviors Enhance Academic Outcomes
(Carlo et al., 2018)

5th Grade

Mother Less Involved W1

.26**

- .15**

10th Grade

Dire

.91***

Compliant

.68***

Emotional

.86***

Prosocial Behaviors W3

.23***

12th Grade

Academic Self-Efficacy W4

.23***

School Grades (adolescent report) W4

.23***

School Grades (teacher report) W4

.16**

.37***
Prosocial Behaviors Enhance Positive Self View

(Carlo et al., 2016)

Bicultural Identity → + Prosocial Behaviors → + Positive Self Evaluations
Evidence for Prosocial Behaviors as Protection Against Risk
Prosocial Behavior Protects Against Discrimination and Depressive Symptoms
(Davis et al., 2016)

*Controlling for previous levels. Partial reverse causal model also supported such that discrimination predicted depression, which predicted altruistic behaviors.
Protective Effects of Prosocial Behaviors on Aggression and Delinquency

(Carlo et al. (2014). The protective role of prosocial behaviors on antisocial behaviors: The mediating effects of deviant peer affiliation. *Journal of Adolescence, 37, 359-366.)*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Altruistic/Compliant Prosocial Behaviors</th>
<th>Deviant Peer Affiliation</th>
<th>Delinquency</th>
<th>Aggression</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>-.12*/-.09*</td>
<td>.40*/.39*</td>
<td>.47*/.47*</td>
<td>n.s./-.16*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>n.s./-.10*</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

Note: Standardized coefficients for altruistic and compliant prosocial behaviors, respectively. Bold lines indicate significant indirect effects. Model fit was perfect because the model was saturated.

* p <.05, n.s. = non significant.
## Ecological Stress-Based Model of Health Outcomes in U.S. Latino/as

(adapted from Carlo & de Guzman, 2009; Carlo & Conejo, 2019)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Historical and Contextual Influences</th>
<th>Mediating/Moderating Influences</th>
<th>Health &amp; Well Being Markers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| Receiving Community and School Context (systems, institutions) | - Self Regulation  
- Stress Appraisals  
- Ethnic Identity  
- Cultural Values  
- Sympathy  
- Moral Reasoning  
- Perspective Taking | - Prosocial Behaviors  
- Academic Achievement  
- Self Esteem  
- Subj. Well Being  
- Health |
| History, Family Influences | Life Event Stressors  
- Ethnic/Race (e.g., discrimination, language)  
- School/work/family-based demands | |
| Direct Youth Stressors | | |
Conclusions

• Prosocial behaviors are indicators of healthy development and well-being
• Several personal characteristics and environmental factors facilitate prosocial behaviors
  • Warm supportive parents and peers, prosocial parenting practices, inductive disciplining, moral reasoning, empathy, good self regulation, exposure to positive media and peers, ethnic socialization practices
• Prosocial behaviors enhances well being
  • Academic outcomes, positive self view, positive interpersonal and intergroup relationships
• Protects against risk factors and reduces risk and pathology
  • Discrimination, family conflict, deviant peer affiliation, illegal substance use, aggression, delinquency, mental health problems
Implications for Prevention and Intervention Research and Programs

• Research
  • Adoption of strength-based, cultural sensitive theories and models
    • Identify culture-group specific protective and growth mechanisms
  • Inclusion of positive health and well being outcomes
  • Inclusion of protective and resiliency predictors
  • Examine and validate measures and evaluation instruments to use with specific culture groups

• Programs
  • Foster and promote culture-related strength mechanisms
  • Consider the inclusion of family into programs
    • Consider that ethnic socialization practices foster positive development
    • Provide warmth and strong support
  • Prepare children for prejudice
  • Foster strong ethnic/racial pride
    • Send positive/negative messages about ethnicity/race
  • Need for policies that provide systemic support
  • Education and training programs for practitioners, educators, agencies, and parents
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Health research throughout the lifespan
Questions?

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“Grant me courage to serve others; For in service there is true life.” (César E. Chávez)